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FM AMEMBASSY BEIJING
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5836
INFO RUEHOO/CHINA POSTS COLLECTIVE
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIJING 000983

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/15/2033

TAGS: PHUM PGOV KIRF PREL CH

SUBJECT: ADDITIONAL REPORTS OF RISING TENSIONS, VIOLENCE IN LHASA, PROTESTS IN OTHER TIBETAN AREAS

REF: A. BEIJING 982

- 1B. BEIJING 981
- 1C. BEIJING 980
- 1D. BEIJING 979
- 1E. BEIJING 976
- 1F. BEIJING 975
- 1G. BEIJING 973

Classified By: Deputy Political Section Chief Ben Moeling.
Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

11. (C) ConGen Chengdu continues to receive reports from sources on the ground in Lhasa indicating rising tensions, increasing violence and the presence of tanks as nightfall descends on the city. The city has apparently been sealed off. Meanwhile, sources say protests in Gansu Province have turned violent in Labrang and Bora, where Tibetan monks reportedly attacked government buildings, resulting in the town being "locked down." Other Tibetan areas have reportedly witnessed increased deployments of security personnel but no violence. End Summary

Further Details on Rising Tensions in Lhasa

12. (C) ConGen Chengdu has received additional details regarding the rising tensions occurring in Lhasa on the evening of March 15. (See ref A for latest report on conditions in Lhasa the afternoon of March 15.) At 17:05 local time, ConGenOff spoke by telephone to an American citizen working near Lhasa's Barkhor area. Although the Amcit was not able to leave his compound, from the vantage point of his front gate, he reported the mood was "getting intense again" and that there was gunfire nearby. People's Armed Police (PAP) personnel were firing single shots from their rifles into stores nearby, perhaps to "intimidate." The Amcit's Tibetan staff told him they were expecting "more shooting tonight." The afternoon of March 15, the Amcit had heard that police had been banging on doors in the central part of the city.

13. (C) The Amcit said he had seen six to eight "armored vehicles" in front of the Jokhang Temple, with numerous vans and buses there too, and that it appeared authorities had set up some sort of "command post" there. When asked about tanks, he responded affirmatively, saying he had watched one tank drive down the street linking Beijing Street with the Barkhor, ripping out telephone poles and smashing an SUV along the way. He said a journalist affiliated with the Economist told him he had tried to walk to the Barkhor but had turned around when he saw a tank and it swiveled its

"turret" toward him.

Lhasa Sealed Off, Reports of Violence

¶4. (S/NF) According to sources contacted by ConGen Chengdu's FSN, roads in and out of Lhasa have been sealed off to all traffic, including public transportation. Currently, the main area of violence in the city is centered on Najing Road and Jiangsu Road, with some areas still burning around the large mosque near the Barkhor. No vegetables are available in city markets. In Youdian Dalu near the post office, a dead body lies unattended in the street under a box, they report.

No Han Chinese Deaths Reported

¶5. (S/NF) Of the four Tibetans in Lhasa contacted by ConGen Chengdu FSN today, none had seen or heard of a death of a Han Chinese. Han Chinese have been the targets of violence. One contact reported walking in Lhasa with a Han friend on March 14, when they were set upon by a gang of Tibetans carrying long knives. The contact identified himself as Tibetan, and the gang left him alone but slashed his Han companion with a knife.

Tibetans Note Offer of "Leniency"

¶6. (C) Other Tibetan sources reported the afternoon of March 15 hearing about the offer by police to impose more lenient sentences on rioters who turned themselves in by Monday the 17th at midnight (ref A). They also said that the police

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were offering "monetary rewards" to those who turned others in. (Note: The Ambassador asked Assistant Foreign Minister Liu Jieyi to provide more information about this in a meeting the evening of March 15 (septel), but AFM Liu had no information to offer.)

Most Tourists Gone

¶7. (C) Most tourists have left central Lhasa under police escort, according to the Amcit source in Lhasa mentioned above. When he was out this afternoon with a Tibetan employee, a gruff PAP officer confronted them and asked his employee why he (the Amcit) was not leaving. The Amcit produced his work permit, and after a swift explanation by his Tibetan employee, the Amcit walked away from the PAP officer without further incident.

Unrest in Other Tibetan Areas: Violence in Gansu

¶8. (S/NF) According to sources of ConGen Chengdu's FSN, monks from Bora Monastery (a branch of the Labrang Monastery) in the Gansu town of Bora have attacked government buildings, and the town has reportedly been "locked down." Meanwhile, reports from Labrang in Gansu say monks have been beaten by police with batons there, but there have been no deaths.

¶9. (C) Areas of Sichuan's Aba Prefecture also report increased security presence around monasteries but no violence.

¶10. (C) Other areas in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), including Shigatse and Lhoka Prefecture (Chinese Shannan), report heavy security presence but no violence. One contact in Lhoka said he had gone to a scheduled meeting on March 15 with a group of friends. When the police saw the group of about 20 people on the street, they were immediately surrounded and questioned and then hustled inside a hotel.

¶11. (U) This message was coordinated with ConGen Chengdu.
RANDT